

## New Directions

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# NEWSFILE

Editorial Staff

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# NEWSFILE

**"Profiles in the Humanities,"** an important series that documents on video tape the accomplishments of prominent scholars and other literary figures, has added the eminent Arthur P. Davis to its list of luminaries.

The Davis interview was taped October 18, 1983, in a meetingroom in the new Undergraduate Library on the main campus. A handful of colleagues and former students of professor Davis were on hand to witness as he told his story to the interviewer, Jennifer Jordan, lecturer in the Department of English.

"Profiles in the Humanities" is sponsored by the Institute for the Arts and the Humanities. Other interviews on file include: Mercer Cook, C.L.R. James, Rayford Logan and Lois Pierre-Noel. All tapes are available for viewing. For information, call the Institute for the Arts and the Humanities.

**WHMM, the university's television station,** was a sponsor in the Washington metropolitan area—with WETA/26—of a program on adolescent drug abuse hosted by First Lady Nancy Reagan.

Called "The Chemical People," the program was aired in two parts in November, followed by town meetings in which viewers expressed their feelings on the evils of drugs in their communities. The effort was part of a nationwide campaign to combat school-age drug and alcohol abuse.

"The Chemical People" was produced in Pittsburgh by WQED and funded by the Richard Mellon Foundation and the Metropolitan Life Foundation.

**A prominent Howard University physician, and a scholar in African studies** recently became the first Black Americans to be named to high offices in two important organizations in their respective fields.

LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr., chairman of the Department of Surgery, College of Medicine, was appointed to a five-year term as secretary to the 40,000-member American College of Surgeons. Robert J. Cummings, director of the African Studies and Research Program, was elected vice president of the African Studies Association. This group, not to be confused with the African Heritage Studies Association, has a membership of close to 30,000. Cummings will serve in this position until 1985 when he is expected to move on to the presidency.

**Two Howard University journalism students, Joseph Perkins and Isabel Wilkerson,** have walked away with top national honors in a writing competition sponsored by Sigma Delta Chi, society of professional journalists.

Perkins was cited for excellence in editorial writing; Wilkerson for excellence in feature writing.

The student weekly "Hilltop" came in second as the best all around student newspaper (behind the "Diamondback" of the University of Maryland) during 1981-82 under the editorship of Wilkerson. Perkins served the paper as managing editor and wrote the editorials for which he won the national honor. Wilkerson's award was for a feature article on a ghetto wedding which she wrote for "The Washington Post" as a summer intern.

**The first annual Ralph Bunche Lecture,** in honor of the late United Nations undersecretary for political affairs and the first Black American to win the Nobel Peace Prize, was inaugurated at the university on October 19.

The Bunche lecture set the stage for a two-day conference on war and peace, "National Security and the Black Community," sponsored by

the Department of Political Science, with which Bunche was affiliated during his early years at Howard. The conference was funded in part by the New World Foundation of New York.

Donald McHenry, former United States ambassador to the United Nations, was the keynote speaker. In his address McHenry focused on the need for Black Americans to be involved in all phases of international affairs, from diplomacy to national security.

**"Quo Vadis Ethiopia?/Which Way Ethiopia?"**, a two-day soul-searching gathering took place November 4-5 on the campus for the second year under the auspices of the African Studies & Research Outreach Program.

Issues ranging from the development of a cohesive language policy to internal/external politics and the ideology of "nation-state" building were discussed. (Published papers from last year's conference are now available. Contact the African Studies and Research Program.)

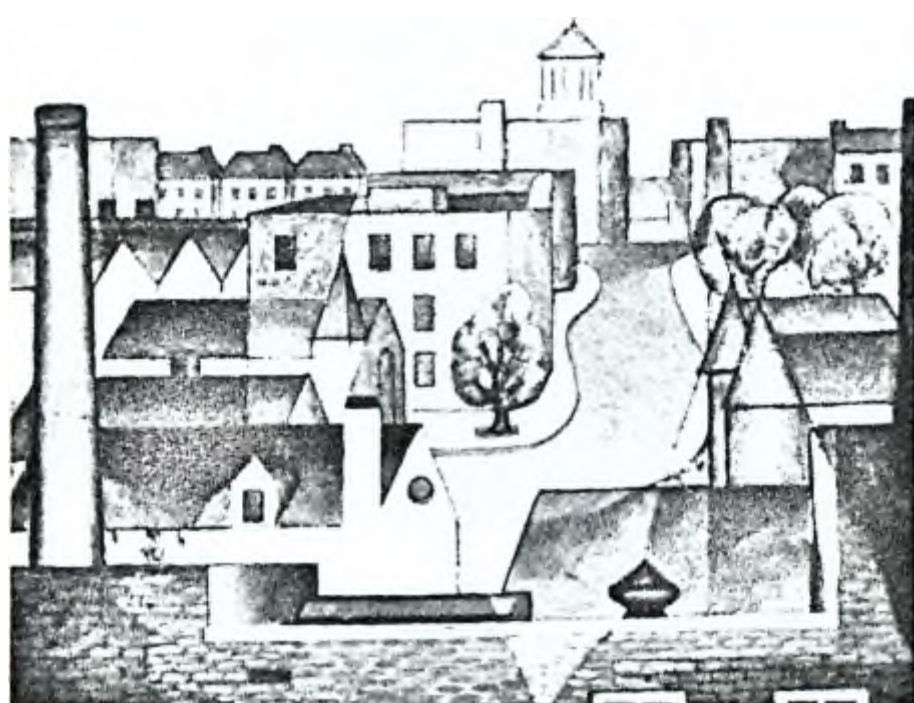
**Artist and teacher Lois Mailou Jones Pierre-Noel** was the guest of honor at a private showing of the documentary film by School of Communications professor Abiyi Ford, "Fifty Years of Painting: Lois Mailou Jones."

The evening, which was sponsored by the university president, included a reception celebrating the artist's 78th birthday. Both events took place in the Blackburn Center on November 18.

"Fifty Years of Painting" became a reality after a decade of intermittent preparation. It opens with paintings of scenes from Martha's Vineyard, where her parents had a summer home. Unlike more conventional documentaries, "Fifty Years" lets the artist tell her own story.

**The art of Washingtonian Hilda Wilkinson Brown,** who died in 1981,





"University Neighborhood" —  
Hilda Wilkinson Brown  
Photography by Garrison's

was rediscovered in grand style when the Howard University Gallery of Art staged a successful month-long exhibition starting on November 3.

Brown's artwork is striking with its mix of cubism with realism. Her paintings reflect her love for nature. The landscapes she painted range in subject from her old neighborhood of LeDroit Park, near the Howard campus, to her summer retreat in Martha's Vineyard.

Included in the Howard exhibit were the illustrations she did in 1937 for "The Negro Family in the United States," a book by E. Franklin Frazier.

**At a conference of the Middle Atlantic Writers Association in November,** Njeri Nuru, associate dean of the School of Communications, paid tribute to the poet Gwendolyn Brooks. Here is some of what she said:

"You call yourself 'ordinary, but beautiful,' Indeed you are..."

You experienced the poverty and hunger of the 1930s and the 1940s. Like Ellison and Baldwin, you were shaped by Americana; developed a universality that spoke especially to the intellectual and in the 1950s and the 1960s enjoyed wide appeal. But you did not become a period poet. You grew and developed with the times,

associated with the aspiring young and inspired the uninspired..."

**The land title to a 108-acre site in Beltsville, Md., was released to Howard University by Terrel Bell,** secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, at a ceremony at the university in September.

The property, which is located outside the city of Washington, was first obtained by the university in June 1971 through the Surplus Property Act. It was to be used as an animal resource center, but those original plans were revised in 1971 to allow the university to utilize the site as a center for advanced research in the life and physical sciences. That year, a 30-inch Coude telescope was installed, courtesy of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. An animal resources unit was constructed in order to enhance the development of the property.

Still mostly undeveloped, university planners see the potential for an important station for scientific research.

**The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA),** has awarded a grant in excess of half a million dollars to the School of Engineering to be used in space research.

Taft H. Broome, chairman of the Department of Civil Engineering, is the principal investigator of the project. Six other professors, including the following four from the university, make up the research team: James Donaldson, chairman of the Department of Mathematics; Ajit K. Choudhury, associate professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering, Robert Reiss and Peter Bainum, both professors in the Department of Mechanical Engineering.

Their research, among other things, will involve developing theoretical knowledge to support the design and

construction of huge space structural systems of at least a mile in diameter.

NASA is expected to renew the grant to a total of \$1.9 million over the next two years. Mathematical models of the space structures are projected to be completed in three years.

**The National Institute of Handicapped Research,** U.S. Department of Education, has awarded a \$650,000 research grant to the university's School of Education.

The money will be used in a project titled "Howard University Model to Improve Rehabilitation Services for Minority Population with Handicapping Conditions." It will be directed by Sylvia Walker, director of the Center for the Study of Handicapped Children and Youth.

The College of Allied Health Sciences and the Schools of Communications, Human Ecology and Social Work are project collaborators.

**A memorial to the estimated 300 Black men,** women and children who served as slaves on George Washington's Mount Vernon estate in Virginia was dedicated on September 21.

The memorial, a simple truncated granite column circled at its base by three rings set off by boxwood sprigs, was designed by a team of students at the university's School of Architecture and Planning, following a competition a little more than a year ago. The idea for the competition evolved from discussions between the school's dean, Harry Robinson, the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, which maintains the estate, and Black community leaders in Fairfax County, Va., who were dismayed that the grave site was identified only by a small marker under an overgrowth of bushes.

More than 30 designs were entered in the competition, which was won by



a 10-member team of students headed by David Edge, who graduated in 1983. Professor William Hicks served as faculty adviser.

The center column of the winning design symbolizes the fortitude of a people forced into bondage while the three rings represent the qualities that enabled the slaves to survive: hope, faith and love.

At the dedication, Virginia Governor Charles Robb told the audience that "the history of America must be the history of all Americans." And Fairfax County schoolteacher Judith Saunders Burton, whose great-great-grandfather West Ford (1784-1863) was once a slave at Mount Vernon, read a stirring poem entitled "Here Lie My Ancestors." (See poetry section.)

Keynote speaker James Turner, director of the Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University, pointed out some of the profound contradictions in American history: that the leader of America's fight for freedom was himself an owner of men, that slavery existed at the very height of the Age of Enlightenment. "George Washington and George Washington's slaves lived in different places and different times... on the same plantation," he said.

At a luncheon following the dedication, Dean Robinson placed the day's events in a larger context:

"The memorial that we dedicated stands in testimony not only to the cooks, carpenters, masons, stockhands, maids, groundskeepers, boatmen and others who worked and maintained the home of the nation's first president, but also to the roots of the Afro-American presence in the continuum of America. Recognition of this presence brings with it a responsibility that is expressed eloquently by Mary McLeod Bethune: 'We are the custodians as well as the heirs of a great civilization.'"



Sketch of slave memorial at Mount Vernon

Photography by Tyrie Bivings

**The first national symposium of Black bibliophiles and collectors attracted some 400 librarians, historians, students, conservators and private connoisseurs of books and memorabilia relating to the Black experience to the Howard campus November 29 and 30.**

Sponsored by the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center and partially funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the symposium was designed to pay long overdue tribute to those Black men and women who early recognized the value of acquiring, collecting and preserving books and other materials documenting Black history and culture. It was also designed to facilitate communication among present-day bibliophiles (booklovers), collectors and research repositories.

Those pioneering Black bibliophiles "were the unsung heroes of our history," noted Tony Martin, chairman of the Black studies department at Wellesley College, one of the symposium speakers. They felt compelled to collect books about the Black experience, he said, in order to counteract many of the pseudoscientific ideas whites promulgated about Blacks as well as to instill hope and pride in the future: "Their reason for collecting books was not only academic, but political."

In another address, Paul Robeson,

Jr., paid tribute to his mother, Eslanda Robeson, for having the foresight to hold onto the massive materials about the life and career of the monumental actor-singer-activist that now make up the bulk of the Paul Robeson Archives (now housed at Moorland-Spingarn). Earlier, Robert Hill, editor of the Marcus Garvey Papers, warned of "the ease with which our people's history is being destroyed," stating that its retrieval "must be our highest priority."

Plans are now underway to publish the papers of Martin, Robeson, Hill and the 25 or so others who addressed the symposium. The published proceedings also will include a national directory of contemporary Black bibliophiles and collectors of Black-related materials. Those interested in being included in the directory should contact the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center. □

Mail to the editor all items to be considered for this column.